

**August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019**

**The Legacy of Sir Vincent Beache  
(Excerpt from the Eulogy delivered by Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves)**

**Introduction**

Over the wide span of years of Sir Vincent's political and governmental activism, he played major leadership roles in the conception and practical roll-out of a huge bundle of significant initiatives, including: the re-introduction of the sugar industry in 1977 – 1979; the land reform programme on former estates of Basil Balcombe, including Mt. Bentinck/Langley Park, Grand Sable, Colonarie, and San Souci estates; the introduction of several new cash crops and the enhanced diversification of agriculture, which earned him the title of the best Minister of Agriculture ever.

Then there was the establishment of the Diamond Diary; the expansion of the Campden Park Industrial Estate; the National Provident Fund and the original framework of the National Insurance Scheme; the Georgetown Hospital; the Petro-Caribe Project; the National Properties Company; the Argyle International Airport; the modern Prison at Belle Isle; the Constitutional Reform Process of 2002-2009; the modernization and reform of the Police Force, including the establishment of the Rapid Response Unit and the National Commission on Crime Prevention; the programmes of repair and construction of Police Stations, nation-wide; the introduction of a modern machine readable e-passport and a sophisticated border security system; the establishment of a modern institutional framework for the regulation of regional civil aviation and the setting up of the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority and its achievement of Category One status; the establishment of the modern Maritime Administration; the shaping of the detailed trading rules in the early years of CARICOM particularly relating to inter-regional trade in agricultural and manufacturing products; the SET programme; the Geothermal Project; Public Sector Reform; and the pursuit of an independent and progressive foreign policy.

This impressive list of practical achievements elevate Sir Vincent as a transformative leader who contributed immensely to the alteration of the socio-economic arrangements, for the better in the people's interest, in post-independent St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

**Outstanding Parliamentarian**

Further, Sir Vincent was an outstanding parliamentarian with a sharp mind, easy speaking style, and possessed of the demonstrable capacity for detailed and well-researched presentations. He knew, authoritatively, the Rules of the House of Assembly, and was experienced in their application as befitting a parliamentarian of 26 years. In Parliament, Sir Vincent had a legendary stamina; on one occasion in the late 1980s as Opposition Leader, he spent over two full days, from morning to way into the night, on his feet, debating the Annual Estimates and Budget. This performance prompted the then government to change the rules of the debate, so as to restrict the Opposition Leader to no more than four hours of debate-time.

On the political platform, our Comrade Leader was compelling and persuasive in his delivery; he was always focused; he kept his audiences' attention with substance, humour, and a skillful use of the language of the folk. In his post-1994 campaigns, he grew to be masterful on the platform; in the comfortable and supportive embrace of his ULP he even danced and pranced in his own inimitable style. We well remember his unique dance moves to the popular song: "*We go mash dem down, cyar lose*".

Our Comrade Leader was a master political organizer, thoughtful strategist, and astute tactician. He saw better and further than most. He displayed a calm acceptance of facts on the ground, of political realities; he never had a compulsion to brood over them but to fashion this real world, not an imagined one, to the benefit of his party and his country. He was possessed of a keen sense of political timing: Instinctively he knew urgency as well as patience and restraint; he tempted less astute political practitioners into elementary errors.

### **Building the ULP**

Undoubtedly, Vincent Beache was primarily responsible for building the ULP as a formidable, well-oiled, easily mobilized machine at the grassroots level, armed with a clear vision, a well-articulated philosophy, carefully-crafted policies, and detailed programmes. His house-to-house campaigning, his links with the people, his relaxed and focused engagements, and his easy-going manner, and his patience with people, were the stuff of legend. Men adored him; women loved him; and the children simply called him "Vincent".

Above all, Comrade Vincent loved people. His politics was about people and the improvement of their lives. He would tell the young men and women in our Party three things: (i) "If you don't love people, don't get into politics". (ii) "If you are not disciplined and committed in your political work, stay out of active politics"; and (iii) "If the women or men in your life don't support you in your day-to-day political work and heg you about your political involvement, leave him or her, or leave the politics alone".

Instinctively, Comrade Vincent Beache was philosophically a social democrat; he was a nationalist and a regionalist; he was an internationalist. The political outlook

and composition of the core leadership of the ULP brought the best out of him in all these respects. He valued political solidarity of like-minded people and groups. He eschewed a pristine individualism and realized that only through collective solidarity and action that real social progress is possible and sustainable. He was anti-imperialist. He was non-communist but not anti-communist. Some people forget that in 1997 he led the first ULP delegation to Cuba. His ideological non-communism did not stop him from engaging fruitfully with the Cuban comrades; he accepted the necessity and desirability of ideological pluralism in our complicated world awash with multiple contradictions.

### **Conclusion**

Sir Vincent's life and work were shaped by his rural upbringing in South Rivers; the liberation theology of Methodism and his belief in Almighty God; his education at the Grammar School; his experience as a primary school teacher; his migrant's life in the United Kingdom and Canada; his stint in the British Air Force; his professional training in electronics and allied disciplines; his membership and leadership of the SVG Labour Party and his paternity and leadership of the ULP; his solidarity with this comrades; his love of, and for, people; his love for Lady Vida, his wife of 57 years and his six children and eleven grandchildren.